

BROOKLAND-BUSH HILL NEWS

A newsletter for the Residents of Brookland-Bush Hill and Gunnell Estates in Alexandria, VA

www.bbhca.net

President's Report

Janet Jaeger, president@bbhca.net

Meeting Dates

As the County eases its guidance on Covid restrictions, we're looking forward to our next in-person meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, September 13, at 7:30 pm. Our community meetings are open to all residents of Brookland-Bush Hill and Gunnell Estates.

Vacant Board Positions

The Board is looking for volunteers to fill three important vacancies:

- First Vice President (Newsletter)
- Neighborhood Watch
- Constitution and Bylaws

Please see us at the September 13 meeting or contact me at president@bbhca.net with any questions you may have.

Our goals for the remainder of the year include boosting membership and determining the best way to distribute our newsletter.

Rose Hill Shopping Center

As published in the August edition of the *Rose Hill Rambler*, Combined Properties has notified the Rose Hill Civic Association that it is working on "a potential change" in approach and an associated redesign of the shopping center. The change in approach comes after meetings with RHCA, neighboring associations, and opinions on the first proposal, which is posted on www.myrosehill.com and will be used for comparison to whatever comes next.

Fairfax County Schools

Fairfax County schools opened August 22. We ask that residents drive carefully through our streets and school zones to ensure the safety of our children.

Covid-19 Vaccine Resources

You can schedule your Covid-19 vaccine appointment via VaccineFinder.org.

For the latest on the vaccine, information can be found on the websites of the Center for Disease Control, the Virginia Department of Health, and the Fairfax County Health Department.

COMMUNITY MEETING

Tuesday, September 10, 2022

7:30 pm

Bush Hill Elementary School
Cafeteria

AGENDA

- Approval of Meeting Minutes
- Board and Committee Reports

GUEST SPEAKER

Delegate Mark Sickles (invited)

DRAFT MINUTES

BBHCA Meeting May 10, 2022

More than 40 members and residents were in attendance. The meeting started with a few opening comments, followed by the election of new board members, as follows:

- President: Janet Jaeger
- Second Vice-President, Membership: Raquel Gutierrez
- Secretary: Jennifer Davis

Treasurer's Report

Katie Mitchell presented an overview of the Proposed 2022 Budget as published in the May *BBHCA News*. Members present voted to approve it with corrections.

Land Use Committee

Rep. Carol Alim provided an extensive update on recent activity. See Land Use at www.bbhca.net.

Presentation by Consolidated Properties Group (CP)

CP owns the Rose Hill Shopping Center and presented their *initial* concept to redevelop the center from retail to mixed-use residential and retail. Presenters included:

- Gregory A. Riegle, Zoning attorney representing CP

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- Andrew McIntyre, CP Executive Vice President
- Alan Henderson, a Development Analyst
- Matthew Fitzsimmons, Architect, HCM Architects

The concept presented is to replace the shopping center with two 5-level residential apartment buildings containing a total of 300-400 rental units over retail stores at ground level. One building would have a 6-level garage with the ground floor dedicated to retail parking. The other building would have a 4-level garage. There will be some surface (non-garage) parking spots for retail.

A grocery store separate from the apartments is included in the plan—it would be at least the size of the current Safeway with an option to be 15,000 sq ft larger. (Safeway has expressed interest in returning to the shopping center after construction, but that would be decided later.)

CP described this meeting with BBHCA and other neighborhood groups as a “listening tour” to hear residents’ questions, concerns, and preferences.

Diagrams of what this concept would look like were presented. The McDonald’s is owned separately and is not included in the plan. The U.S. Post Office and Truist Bank on Franconia Rd to the west of the center are also not affected by this plan.

Early 2027 is likely the soonest they could begin demo, in part because of current leases. CP has not finalized any decisions or filed any plans with Fairfax County yet; once they do, the zoning review process will take several years. Once that is complete, CP anticipates demolition and construction would take 3 ½ -4 years. All businesses will be closed during construction.

CP described this meeting with BBHCA and similar meetings with other neighborhood groups as a “listening tour” to hear residents’ questions, concerns, and preferences. They want our input so that whatever plan they decide on will serve the neighborhood and be profitable.

Why is CP considering redeveloping Rose Hill? CP explained that the demand for retail space has been declining for several years, driven by online shopping and accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The CP owner is interested in making decisions to improve communities while making a profit. The VP also said CP is not interested in clearing the property and selling everything off to developers to make money. They see this is an investment in the community.

No traffic impact analysis has been conducted yet. That would be done by a third party at a later point in the process.

Question & Answer Session

BBHCA members present asked many questions and shared many concerns. The main themes were:

Traffic: concern about increased volume of traffic on Franconia Rd and Rose Hill Dr, both for drivers and pedestrians; concern about cars taking shortcuts through residential parts of the neighborhood to avoid increased traffic on Franconia Rd because of the shopping center.

Density: Additional residents will mean more students in already crowded schools; what if apartment residents have more than their allotted number of cars and park on side streets.

Appearance/architectural style of the new center: The presentation contains photos of other similar CP projects, which are very modern looking (lots of glass and steel); residents preferred brick or a more traditional look that would blend better with our neighborhood.

Noise and Light Pollution: Lights on the high floors of a 6-level garage will be visible from many of the nearby residences.

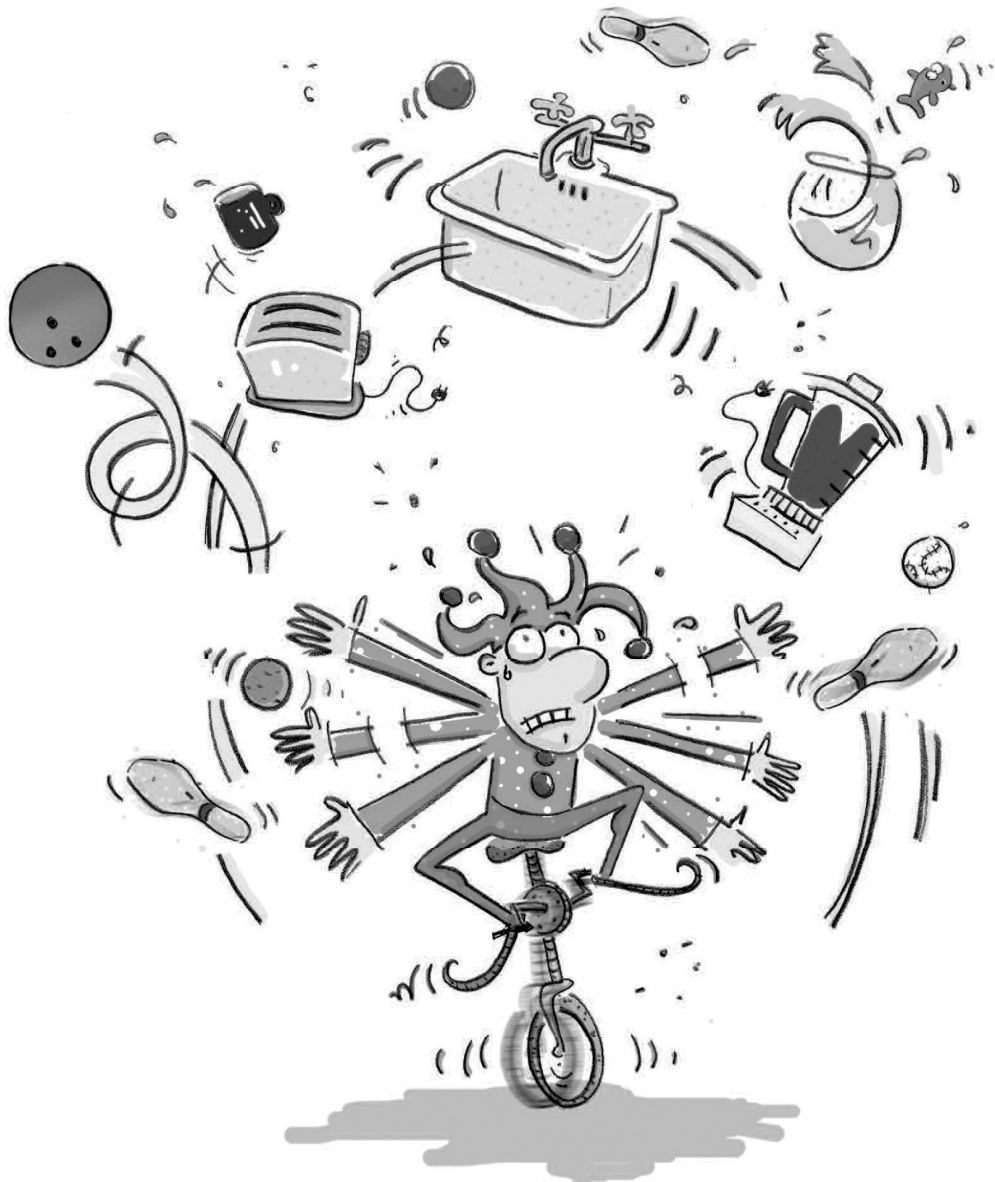
Character of the Neighborhood: Several attendees expressed concern that 6 story parking garages will loom over the nearby residential parts of the neighborhood.

Type of Stores in a new center: Residents noted the popularity and convenience of the current stores; others pointed out that several of the current businesses and restaurants are local/not chain, and feared they would be priced out of a new center; others noted that our neighborhood is economically diverse – residents who don’t own cars and rely on the proximity of the stores and the laundromat will struggle during construction and permanently depending on what replaces them.

Safety & Availability of Parking: Several residents disliked the idea of having to park on the ground level of a garage to shop at the stores, especially at night; others were concerned there would not be sufficient parking for non-residents.

LEED (green building rating system): One attendee asked if the new center would be LEED certified; the presenters noted Fairfax County has some requirements, and a new center would be “green, but not LEED, because there are some better alternatives”.

The CP representatives were receptive to these questions and concerns and said they will be holding many more community meetings. They also offered to take any of us on a guided tour of other CP projects. They noted a finished CP project in DC and a “hard hat” tour of the Penn Daw Center on Rte 1, which is still under construction.



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Land Use Update May-July 2022

Carol Alim, landuse@bbhca.net

Franconia Springfield Hospital (PA-2001-00012)

This application is to modify the Comprehensive Plan Language and to rezone the property that currently houses the Inova Healthplex, which was built in 2000. This property is bounded by the Franconia-Springfield Parkway, Beulah Street, Walker Lane. The proposal is to change the Comp Plan and rezone the property to allow Inova to build a 250-bed hospital on this site.

At the June Meeting, the Franconia District Land Use Committee voted to recommend approval of the Comprehensive Plan changes: 18-0-1 (yes-no-abstain). At the July Meeting, the Committee voted to recommend approval of the rezoning request: 21-1-0. This application will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors in September 2022. If approved, Inova will begin filing for permits with a plan to open the new facility in 2027.

- Link to background information, presentation to Land Use Committee, project schedule/status.
<https://www.inova.org/franconia-springfield-hospital>
- Link to Staff report:
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/sites/planning-development/files/assets/documents/compplanamend/inova-springfield-healthplex/2021-iv-s1-staff-report.pdf>

Child Care/Early Learning Center

This application for Learning Experience was presented by Ganges Alexandria LLC at the June and July meetings. The application is to build a childcare center at 8214 Richmond Hwy. A plan amendment was granted for this property three years ago, but the property was sold. The new owner/applicant met with the neighboring communities to review their plan and is proposing development consistent with adjacent buildings along the Richmond corridor.

Learning Experience has 17 locations in MA, NJ, NY, VA, TX, and IL. They have a focus on Advanced Enrichment Learning, including math, science, STEM, coding, art, music, Spanish, Mandarin, and Yoga. At the July meeting, they indicated that they will increase the number of EV charging stations, use green building standards, include a sound barrier, include open space, and have a green buffer area. They will also dedicate land for the Richmond Hwy project and provide escrow funds for road improvements. Their revised proposal met the concerns presented earlier by Staff and the Committee.

The Committee voted to recommend approval of this development: 20-1-0.

Villa Park

This was an informational presentation for a proposed plan amendment and rezoning of a residential property zoned R1 (1 dwelling per acre), which is located on the west side of I95 in the Springfield area. Ben Franklin Park and Franklin Commons are neighboring communities. The plan is to build 43 townhome units on this site with 4 parking units per dwelling (2 garage, 2 drive-way). The communities to the north and south are townhouses, 12 per acre and 4-5 per acre respectively; to the west are single family homes, 1-2 per acre.

The applicant made changes since their earlier presentation, including lowered the density from 8.5 to 7.4 units per acre and improved tree density on the property. Questions were raised about number of parking spaces and access to Backlick Road (doesn't back up to Backlick). Applicant will be back for the September meeting.

Springfield Town Center

Phase 1, the redevelopment of the shopping center is complete. We are now beginning to review Phase 2 development, which includes hotel, office, and residential development. Note that the Firestone site and Spring Mall Square are not part of Springfield Town Center.

The first informational presentation was by Inter Mountain Hotels: PCA/CDPA/FDPA 2007-LE-008-02. This site is on the Loisdale southerly side of the Town Center. It was approved in 2007 for hotel at the rear of the property and an office building on Loisdale Road; the applicant would like to relocate the hotel to Loisdale Road.

This application proposed to reduce the previously approved size of 180,000 gross square feet (gsf), with 225 rooms to 95,000 gsf with 140 rooms. They are looking at a full suite concept with a unique rooftop outdoor space. The hotel would be 6 floors, with option to go to 7 floors and provide parking below the building as well as some surface parking. The Tesla charging stations that are located on the site would be moved to the north. Inter Mountain Hotels will be back before Land Use in the fall, with Planning Commission Public Hearing scheduled for November 16, 2022.

The second informational presentation was by Hannover Springfield: PCA/CDPA/FDPA 2007-LE-008-07. This property is on the Spring Mall side of the Town Center. This site was originally approved for two residential towers; Hannover would like to reposition them and add a fitness park and dog park along Spring Mall. Their proposal would include structured and surface parking. They are approved for 400,000 sf of residential (352 units) and 8,000 sq retail; they are proposing 475,000 sf of residential (460 units) with no retail. Questions concerned lack of access to Spring Mall Square; that the fitness park is too small; dangerous location for dog park; increased traffic; concern for loss of farmers market; and the need for some retail given the number of units. (There may have been a

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Land Use Update, *continued from page 4*

grocery store approved for the site in 2007 when the Mall was redesigned and the property rezoned.) Hanover will be back before Land Use in the fall.

No meeting in August; the next Land Use meeting will be September 12, 2022.

BBHCA HISTORY

Personal Recollections by Roy Rice (1934-2011)

Originally submitted 2/23/2002

Roy Rice, his wife Doris, and their two children, Craig and Colleen, moved into their new house on Hopark Dr. in 1969. Within one to two years, he was attending meetings of the Brookland Civic Assn., the forerunner of our current Brookland Bush Hill Civic Assn. After the Association was broadened to include Bush Hill, Roy subsequently started attending meetings of the Lee District Land Use and Transportation Advisory Committee. He continued on this committee as his main civic activity for total service of over 25 years. Roy served BBHCA as an officer on the Executive Committee and three years as President (reviving the organization after it closed due to lack interest). He also served on various committees for area plan reviews (aka zoning), including the area around the Van Dorn Metro Station, and other advisory organizations, e.g., on the Fairfax County Group Residential Facilities Commission for about 10 years, the Lee District Association of Civic Associations (president), and the South East Fairfax Development Corp. Board of Directors.

Background and Some Key People

"I moved into a new home on Hopark Drive in Bush Hill in January 1969, as this Hopark extension of our community was nearing its completion. Several months after getting settled in, I heard by word of mouth that a civic association met in the Bush Hill school. I subsequently attended a meeting of what was then the Brookland Estates Civic Association, and found out that I could attend, but could not join the association. Though the Bush Hill and Brookland areas were joined by Brookland Road, an association had been formed in Brookland some years prior. While the issue of expanding membership to the Bush Hill area had apparently previously come up of and on, they did not wish to change their basic membership, but were clearly open to other local residents attending their meetings, though nonmembers received no newsletter/meeting announcements.

A few years later, membership was extended to Bush Hill residents, apparently in part due to reduced attendance and activity of Brookland residents. I joined the

expanded association and became more active, but by about the mid-70s membership and participation in the expanded association waned, so the association ceased publishing a newsletter and holding meetings. After a year or so I contacted Gladys Keating, who was still president (and had been for several years), as well as Roy Blum and proposed that we reactivate the association, which we successfully did.

I subsequently became president in the mid to late 70s and was followed by a number of very capable presidents. If my memory serves me accurately these were in order: Peter Mermagen, Steve Long, Bob Michie, Dave Lewis, Carol Lewis, Sally Chapman, Laurie Sisson, and Larry Carter (most of whom served three years). Our being the combined Brookland/Bush Hill Civic Association was formally incorporated in a comprehensive revision of the Constitution and Bylaws around 1980 (I believe in a committee led by Pete Mermagen).

While much of the burden of running an association fall on the president's shoulders, others also play key roles. Some that readily come to my mind are, in approximate chronological order. Roy Blum was a long-term stalwart of the association, holding several positions over the years, as well as preparing (mimeographing) the newsletter and distributing it to Brookland Estates homes, and serving on the Lee District Land Use Committee (and getting me active in it).

Earl Palmer was treasurer for many years, including keeping our accounts in order during our periods of inactivity. He also had the initiative (apparently during one of our periods of inactivity) to go to the Franconia police station to get an accident report on the destruction of the nice brick and brass letter Brookland Estates sign at the intersection of Brookland and Franconia Roads by a single car accident. From this he submitted a claim to the driver's insurance company and collected about \$600-\$700 for the association, which today is the primary source of our reserves of about \$15,000.

Bill McDonough was quite active and served several times on nominating and membership committees. Dot Cosby long filled several roles such as nominating committees, newsletter distribution, and Neighborhood Watch very well.

Some Key Issues and Activities

Our association has been active on a variety of issues over the years, besides its ongoing function to inform residents on many topics of interest. Some key examples are as follows. Two earlier examples with which I am less familiar concern drainage. One, apparently the first, was mostly or exclusively in the Bush Hill area, where storm sewer handling was inadequate, and the association played a role in getting this corrected. This was apparently a factor in Gladys Keating subsequently becoming active in seeking election to the state legislature. The other drainage problem

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BBHCA History, *continued from page 5*

that resulted from inadequate handling of storm water runoff was from the McDonalds on Franconia Road, where again initial provisions were inadequate, but later corrected.

One of our two most tumultuous issues was over ten years ago. It was over Plan language for further development of our neighborhood, especially into what several years later became the completion of Waycross Drive and Westchester Street, along with the construction of Barbmor Court. There was a very vocally led group that wanted to see all remaining streets in our area cul-de-saced, contrary to county policy, limiting sidewalk access to Bush Hill School and precluding other possible access to further development north of us. Because I supported road connections, not cul-de-sacing, I was attacked and denied timely rebuttal of false accusations against me in the newsletter. Our second biggest meeting was prompted by this controversy culminating in an attempt to remove me as the 'Land Use' representative. Of just under a hundred members present at this meeting to address my continuing of the Land Use committee, six or less voted against me.

However, the strife had its consequences. One unfortunate after effect was a last-minute change in our election procedures to not only not reelect Steve Long president, but to block his running for any other office (he did serve as secretary a few years later). More seriously, this and related strife compromised our efforts on other problems, e.g., it probably limited concessions we could extract in the expansion of the McDonalds, in particular the wall along Brookland Road. Note that a few years later when the Gunnell family sought by right (i.e., with no neighborhood input) development of this Waycross Drive, Westchester Street, and Barbmor Court area, the county approved connections of streets some had sought to cul-de-sac with no word from them since. Further, the developer who subsequently built this addition to our neighborhood volunteered that while cul-de-sacing of the included streets would have been advantageous to him, connecting them was better for the community.

Our most tumultuous meeting following the above meeting by probably less than two years, was to vote on

the proposal to establish a group home for male adults with some mental problems in a home in our neighborhood on Franconia Road across from the Rose Hill shopping center. This was after a few preceding meetings to address the group home issue. Besides being the Land Use representative, I was also the appointee for Lee District to the Group Residential Facilities Commission, whose job was to review and make recommendations on proposed group homes and oversee those in operation. The great majority of the about 125 people at this meeting voted against the group home despite the fact that none of their objections were on any required legal grounds. Claims were made that there was a serious safety hazard in the proposed residents crossing Franconia Road, contrary to police records showing no serious traffic accidents there. Also, earlier apparent drug problems of previous residents of the house were neglected. The concerns over such homes reflect common fears of unknown factors. (Note that an earlier preliminary proposal for a group home on Bush Hill Drive for abused women was dropped due to pressure of nearby residents on the homeowner.) The home on Franconia was approved, and no serious problems have arisen in the subsequent ten or more years of its operation (including its move to another nearby house in the interim). Also, two group homes for the elderly have since been established in our neighborhood without objection or incident.

A more recent issue before the association was the accident in front of Edison and the serious injury of the young student pedestrian there. Not only did the association strongly support the subsequent establishing of a traffic light there, two presidents Sally Chapman and Laurie Sisson, also established 'Lilly's fund' to aid the seriously injured student's recovery. We explored the possibility of having the Edison light serve the dual purpose of pedestrians and vehicular access to Edison and car access to Brookland Road, but this was not practical. This thus leaves the longstanding and growing issue of a traffic light-controlled egress from our neighborhood, which is both complicated and uncertain.

Other traffic issues have been partly addressed, e.g., some traffic calming on Westchester, and requests for more, e.g., on Brookland Road, but more issues are expected. Another possible major issue is the remaining development of the rest of the Oakwood area, whether it will be along the lines of the current Plan or not, and the specifics in either case. A major issue will be designing and building interchanges of Van Dorn with both Franconia and with the Beltway. However, these and many other needed road and highway repairs and improvements are probably many years off, given the financial crisis in the state.

Our civic association has thus survived some past difficult and divisive situations, and given reasonable perspective and participation, will continue to survive, and hopefully prosper, in the future."

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BROOKLAND-BUSH HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION

BROOKLAND-BUSH HILL NEWS

A newsletter for the Residents of Brookland-Bush Hill
and Gunnell Estates in Alexandria, VA 22310

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JOIN YOUR NEIGHBORS FOR OUR COMMUNITY MEETING Tuesday, September 10, 2022 7:30 pm

Location:
**Bush Hill Elementary School
Cafeteria**

AGENDA

- Approval of May 2022 Meeting Minutes
- Board and Executive Committee Reports

GUEST SPEAKER

Delegate Mark Sickles (invited)

*If Fairfax County Schools close for any reason on the
day of our meeting, the meeting will be cancelled.
See www.fcps.edu/alerts*

BBHCA Board and Committees

President

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Second Vice-President, Membership

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Treasurer

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Secretary

Jennifer Davis / secretary@bbhca.net

Constitution and Bylaws Committee

Vacant / bylaws@bbhca.net

Land Use Committee

Carol Alim / landuse@bbhca.net

Neighborhood Watch Committee

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Yard Sale Committee

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